

POST OFFICE—PHILADELPHIA.

[To accompany Bill H. R. No. 814.]

JUNE 4, 1860.

Mr. LEE, from the Committee on the Post Office and Post Roads,
made the following

REPORT.

The Committee on the Post Office and Post Roads, to whom were referred the petitions of numerous citizens of Philadelphia, asking action by Congress in relation to the post office and United States court-rooms in said city, would respectfully report:

That in the investigation of the subject they find that on the 18th of August, 1856, a law was passed by Congress authorizing the purchase of the site and building of the Pennsylvania Bank, for the purposes of a post office; by the same act \$50,000 were appropriated for changing and refitting it for a post office.

At the same time, and embodied in the same act, an appropriation of \$78,000 was made for the purchase of the American Philosophical Hall, for the use of the United States courts. Owing to a defective title this property has never been purchased by the government.

On the 3d of March, 1857, a further appropriation of \$100,000 was made by Congress for the purpose of refitting the Pennsylvania Bank building for the purposes of a post office; but soon after the work had been entered upon, and about \$20,000 had been expended in refitting the building, the work was suspended by order of the Postmaster General.

During the ensuing session of Congress a commission was raised, consisting of the Postmaster General, Attorney General, and Secretary of the Treasury, to proceed to Philadelphia and investigate the whole matter, and report their views thereon. Accordingly, on the 1st of December, 1858, the commissioners reported.

This report favored the sale of the Pennsylvania Bank property, (estimating it to be worth \$100,000, though the price paid by the government was \$250,000.) They also favored the idea of purchasing a new location for the post office, on Chestnut street, adjoining the custom-house.

The next action had by Congress upon this subject was the passage

of a law authorizing the sale of the Pennsylvania Bank for a sum not less than \$127,000, and the American Philosophical Hall for \$78,000, (a piece of property for which the United States never had a title to,) and which therefore it could not sell and convey. The proceeds from which sales, together with the unexpended balance of the \$100,000 appropriated in 1857 for refitting the Pennsylvania Bank building for a post office, were directed to be expended in the purchase of two lots on Chestnut street, next adjoining the custom-house, and for the erection of a post office building thereon. The Pennsylvania Bank property was subsequently put in market, and although the friends of the Chestnut street location subscribed \$15,000 as a bonus to be paid to any purchaser who would take the Pennsylvania Bank property at the price specified in the act, still no one was found to take it on those terms. From the petitions and other statements in the hands of the committee, as well as through the representatives from Philadelphia in this House, the fact is made patent that either the Pennsylvania Bank or the location on Chestnut street would substantially accommodate the business interests of the city, and that much of the delay, and difficulty, and loss to the government, has been owing to a scramble among property holders to sell lots, and of money brokers to obtain commissions in making sales. In view of all the facts brought to the notice of the committee, they have reached the conclusion that a law ought to be passed authorizing the sale of the Pennsylvania Bank for a sum not less than \$110,000.

That the \$78,000 appropriated for the purchase of the American Philosophical Hall, and the unexpended balances of \$50,000 made August 18, 1856, and the \$100,000 appropriated 3d March, 1857, for the purpose of refitting the Pennsylvania Bank for a post office, be re-appropriated, making—

Pennsylvania Bank.....	\$110,000
American Philosophical Hall.....	78,000
Unexpended balance, about.....	130,000
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	318,000
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That of this sum \$161,000 be appropriated for the purchase of the Levy and Baily lots, next adjoining the custom-house, and being about (together) 57x225 feet, and that the balance, \$157,000, be expended in the erection of a suitable building on said lots for a post office, and for the holding of the United States courts, and providing that no other or further sum shall be asked for or granted by Congress to the city of Philadelphia for such purposes.